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MODI OPENS INDIA'S LONGEST BRIDGE LINKING MUMBAI TO NAVI MUMBAI

Built at a cost of ₹17,840 crore, the bridge will cut travel time between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai from two hours to 20 minutes

IT'S 21.8 KM LONG WITH A 16.5 KM SEA LINK

The six-lane trans-harbour bridge is 21.8 km long with a 16.5 km long sea link and will also reduce the travel time between Mumbai and Pune. The project's foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016. "The sea bridge is a reflection of Viksit Bharat. It shows India's infrastructural prowess and march towards being a developed nation," Modi said on Friday

FOUNDATION LAID FOR NEXT MEGA PROJECT

- With months left for Lok Sabha elections, Modi attacked the Opposition saying, "Before 2014, mega scams used to be the topic of discussion. But (now), mega projects getting completed is the talk"
- He laid the foundation stone for another mega project on Friday — an ₹8,000 crore tunnel that links east and south Mumbai

₹375

IS THE TWO-WAY TOLL FOR CARS ON ATAL SETU. IT IS ₹1,245 FOR BUSES

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

British Royal Air Force's Typhoon FGR4 conducting precision strikes in Yemen | x

US, UK walk the talk as missiles hit Houthi sites

BLINKEN, JAISHANKAR DISCUSS SITUATION

Hours before strike began, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken dialled India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to gave him a heads-up about the impending strike. The two "discussed the US's and India's shared concerns over the reckless Houthi attacks in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden," the US State Dept said in a statement

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

THE US and the UK on Friday launched their first military response to Yemen-based Houthi rebels' persistent drone and missile attacks on commercial ships passing through the Red Sea, striking over 60 targets at 16 sites of the Iran-backed militant group.

US officials said warship- and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles and fighter jets were used to hit Houthi targets deep inside Yemen. While both the US and the UK claimed the massive strike crippled Houthis' ability to threaten ships, the battle-hardened militant group vowed to avenge the attack on their assets. They said five of their fighters were killed and six others injured in the strikes.

According to a post-strike assessment by the US Air Force's Mideast command, the rebels' command-and-control nodes, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities, and air defence radar systems were destroyed in the strikes. US President Joe Biden said the strikes were meant as a message to the rebels to stop disrupting trade, while British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said they were in self defence.

Meanwhile, oil prices surged over fears that the regional conflict may escalate to become a much wider conflict. Brent futures were up 4% at $80.52 a barrel on Friday, while US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 4.1% to $74.99.

The Houthis have launched 27 attacks on commercial vessels passing through the Red Sea since mid-November. The US had issued multiple warnings over several days before it retaliated on Friday. P12

FAKE MASTERS DEGREE HELPED HIM BECOME DIRECTOR OF DGCA

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

ONE of the directors of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had allegedly produced a fake masters degree certificate from a university in Sikkim to appear for the UPSC exam to rise up the ranks in his profession, according to sources.

The Directorate of Higher Education in Sikkim wrote to DGCA a month ago stating that the certificate produced by Ravinder Singh Jamwal was not genuine and EILM University offers no such course. However, the official continues in his position undisturbed, taking crucial decisions, the sources said.

The sources said Jamwal's experience as a Naval ATC in Goa helped him join DGCA. Documents with *TNIE* reveal that Jamwal had 11 years' experience (July 3, 2000, to July 3, 2011) at INS Hansa Dabolim Airport, Goa. After that, he worked as general manager (operations), Reliance Commercial Dealers Ltd.

He then joined DGCA as assistant director (operations) on October 1, 2012. After some years, he applied for the post of deputy director (operations). The selection for this post is through UPSC and applicants should have a degree in Aeronautical/ Electrical or Electronics or a MSc degree in electronics or physics. He got selected for it in March 2016. After working for five years as deputy director, Jamwal was appointed as director in 2021.

He now heads the Air Space and Air Navigation Services Standards (ANSS) and the Flights Standards Directorate. P5

EXPRESS READ

Siddu launches fifth guarantee Yuva Nidhi

SHIVAMOGGA: Launching Yuva Nidhi on Friday, CM Siddaramaiah said the state government will not only provide stipends to unemployed youth, but also offer them skill development training to enhance their employability in the country and abroad. P4

Wipro's net falls 12% to ₹2,694 cr in Dec quarter

NEW DELHI: IT company Wipro on Friday posted a nearly 12 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,694.2 crore in the third quarter ended December 2023 amid a "cautious" demand environment and clients making conservative investments. P13

Twin blows as industrial output down, inflation up

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

IN a double whammy to the economy, India's industrial output growth plummeted to an eight-month low of 2.4% in November 2023 — down from the previous month's 16-month high of 11.6% — while retail inflation rose to a four-month high at 5.69% in December.

The fall in industrial output was largely due to the poor performance of the manufacturing sector, whose output growth dropped to a seven-month low of 1.2% in November. In the same month, consumer durables production saw a sharp decline of 5.4%, marking its lowest output since the peak of the second Covid wave in June 2021.

Similarly, electricity generation in November 2023 dwindled to its lowest level since February, a stark contrast to the 20.4% surge registered in October.

Of the 23 manufacturing segments, only six experienced growth in November. Among the segments that showed notable growth were coke and refined petroleum products (14.2%), other transport equipment (9.8%), and motor vehicles (9.2%).

However, furniture output dropped by 30.5%. Computers and electronics fell by 25% exceeding their 15.2% cumulative decline thus far in 2023-24. Wearing apparel production continued its downward trend, dropping 20.5%.

Meanwhile, the mining sector exhibited a growth of 6.8%, reaching its highest production levels since April 2023. And, consumer non-durables output hit its highest level since January 2023.

The rise in retail inflation was primarily driven by food articles, despite a deceleration in prices of cereals and vegetables compared to the previous month.

While cereals and vegetables experienced price reductions, the overall food prices continued to rise. Food price inflation spiked to 9.53% in December, up from 8.70% in the previous month.

GOA MURDER CASE

Guilty and frustrated, says CEO mom's note

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Panaji/Belagavi

POLICE achieved a breakthrough in the sensational Goa murder case where a four-year-old boy was smothered to death by his mother Suchana Seth, CEO of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) start-up in Bengaluru, on Friday.

A tissue paper on which it was written with an eyeliner, "I am extremely guilty and frustrated. I love my son, but I did not want to see him meeting his father'', was recovered from the bag of Suchana.

According to sources, Suchana confessed to writing it, but continues to maintain that she did not kill her son.

The Goa police sent the note to the forensic laboratory for tests. The note hinted at her strained relationship with her husband and how she was unhappy with the court order allowing him to meet their son.

The sources said Suchana has been consistently boasting of her AI profession and skills while denying her involvement in the crime. She blames her estranged husband Venkat Raman for the crime. "Surprisingly, she shows no remorse for her son's death," they added.

The latest revelation indicates that Suchana allegedly wished for her son's peaceful death. Having misled her husband about meeting his son in Bengaluru on January 7, Suchana flew to Goa with the alleged intention of committing the crime. P3

IAF An-32 debris found 7 yrs after it went missing

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

Over seven years after an Indian Air Force An-32 aircraft with 29 defence personnel on board went missing during an operational mission, its debris appear to have been spotted on the sea bed 3.1 km off the coast of Chennai.

The debris was found last month by scientists at the Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), which had recently deployed an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) equipped with multiple payloads, including a multi-beam SONAR (Sound Navigation and Ranging) and high-resolution cameras, at the last-known location of the aircraft.

The AUV picked up strong SONAR reflections from the seabed at a depth of 3,400 metres. The team at NIOT clicked pictures of the debris and sent them to the Air Force, which studied them and concluded that the debris belonged to an An-32 aircraft. "This discovery at the probable crash site, with no other recorded history of any other missing aircraft report in the same area, points to the debris as possibly belonging to the crashed An-32," a statement said. The An-32 aircraft took off from Chennai's Tambaram Air Force Station on July 22, 2016, and was en route to Andaman and Nicobar Islands when it went missing over the Bay of Bengal.

World-class sports museum to come up in Bengaluru

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

THE state government is planning to set up a world-class sports museum in the city on the lines of Qatar Sports Museum. The museum will showcase international and desi sports and games.

The government's aim is to inspire youngsters to take up sports through this initiative. The proposed museum is likely to be set up at the Kanteerava Stadium off Vittal Mallya road. Infact, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the setting up of the museum in his last budget and set aside Rs 5 crore for it. However, no progress was made in that direction.

Recently, the Department of Sports and Youth Services invited tenders for project management and consultancy services for the establishment of the museum. This initiative is said to be the brainchild of Congress MLC K Govindaraju, who heads the Karnataka Olympic Association and the PHIBA Asia-India Basketball Federation. P2